REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE, DR. LACKRAM BODOE
MINISTER OF HEALTH

THE SOCIETY FOR INHERITED AND SEVERE BLOOD DISORDERS TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

ANNUAL WALKATHON

QUEEN’S PARK SAVANNAH

SUNDAY 22nd JUNE, 2025

6:30 A.M.

It is my pleasure to address you this morning and be with you at the Annual Walkathon, organised by the Society of Inherited and Severe Blood Disorders, to highlight and bring public awareness to inherited blood disorders. I commend the Society for continuing to be the voice of and supporting individuals living with these disorders.

Today, we walk not just for exercise or awareness, but for every child, adult and family affected by conditions such as sickle cell disease, thalassemia and other severe blood disorders. Your presence here is a symbol of hope, strength and solidarity.

The Ministry of Health understands that the management of genetic haematological disorders requires an all-inclusive approach, from genetic testing to psychological and social support.

For this reason, I wish to reaffirm the Ministry’s commitment to improving early diagnosis, expanding treatment access and ensuring our health system provides compassionate, consistent and comprehensive care for persons inflicted with these disorders.

The Ministry of Health remains steadfast in its support, particularly in ensuring the availability of a safe and sustainable supply of blood and blood products, which are often life-saving for many living with these disorders.

To this end, we continue to encourage voluntary blood donation across the country. The goal of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation is to ensure a consistent, safe and adequate supply of blood through the goodwill of persons who donate without expecting payment or personal benefit. This system promotes a culture of altruism and social responsibility, encouraging people to donate out of a genuine desire to help others in need. By removing incentives, it reduces the risk of persons hiding health conditions that may compromise blood safety. It’s about building a system we can trust, where donations come from genuine care rather than personal gain.

Voluntary non-remunerated blood donation is also important to the health and resilience of any society. It guarantees that blood is available during emergencies, surgeries, childbirth complications and for patients with chronic illnesses like cancer or sickle cell disease. When people donate blood out of compassion, it strengthens community bonds and promotes public health equity. Additionally, it fosters a culture of care, where persons are aware that their small act of kindness can save multiple lives, creating a ripple effect of goodwill and mutual support.

I am also pleased to share that there are amendments to the Children’s Life Fund Act which include blood disorders, including sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia, on schedule three of the list of life limiting illnesses. This inclusion now allows the Ministry of Health to expand the reach of the Children’s Life Fund to assist children with severe cases, including life-saving interventions not presently available in Trinidad and Tobago, thereby ensuring improved quality of life for these patients.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us continue walking this journey together toward awareness, inclusion and better health outcomes for all.

The Ministry of health remains committed to providing our unwavering support to individuals coping with these conditions.

I once again would like to express my gratitude to the Society of

Inherited and Severe Blood Disorders, for its tireless advocacy and community outreach that benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I wish you every success at this event and I thank you for your support.